

# Mozambique

## ten years on...

*South Africa's neighbour Mozambique too celebrates ten years of democratic rule this year and holds its third democratic elections in December 2004. **Eddie Webster** and **Geoffrey Wood** provide a brief overview of the dynamics around the upcoming elections.*



**M**ozambique has suffered two major wars; an anti-colonial war of liberation, mostly confined to the far north that lasted from 1964-1974, followed by civil war from 1976-1992. The latter was sparked off and fanned through systematic destabilisation policies firstly of the then Rhodesian government, and later, South Africa's apartheid government.

The civil war, which resulted in a million casualties and the GDP being halved, was fuelled by rural resentment to the centralised planning of the early years of independence. Peasant opposition centred on badly handled and rushed modernisation, an unwillingness to decentralise power, as well as the implementation of a number of ill-advised policies, including the reintroduction of the forced cultivation of cotton in the Nampula region.

While Frelimo made major advances in the provision of education and health care in rural areas, it failed to support individual peasant farmers, while its abolition of the structures of

traditional leadership was deeply resented by the incumbents of such positions. The cessation of hostilities between Frelimo and the rebel movement, Renamo, in 1992, led to Mozambique's first democratic elections in 1994.

Frelimo won 53% of the vote in the presidential elections and 129 seats in parliament, compared to Renamo's 34% and 112 seats. The tiny Democratic Union coalition won 9 seats. In 1999 Frelimo narrowly secured the presidency, with 52% of the vote, and some 133 parliamentary seats. Renamo remained the main opposition, and performed relatively well in the 1999 elections, winning some 117 of 250 parliamentary seats and 48% of the presidential vote. Its stronger performance in the presidential poll reflected both persistent rural discontent, and the fact that it had subsumed the Democratic Union coalition and a number of smaller parties into the Renamo Electoral Union. In turn, Renamo guaranteed all ten small party leaders seats in parliament, through favourable placing

on its electoral list. National elections are set to take place in December 2004 with Frelimo's official candidate being Armando Guebuza, a long-standing opponent of President Chissano, who is retiring from the presidency.

Hanlon argues that the marginalisation of rural areas under structural adjustment represents a major cause of discontent in Renamo's rural heartland, cementing support for that party, despite its lacklustre performance. Indeed, the rising gap between rich and poor, and between town and country, represents a major threat to the country's stability.

Renamo's political style remains confrontational. It lacks the experience and skills necessary to be an effective parliamentary opposition. Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama runs the party as a personal fiefdom, and has systematically marginalised potential rivals. However, Frelimo has done little to build consensus with Renamo, or given it a real stake in the existing order; Hanlon suggests that a possible way forward would be to give it small amounts of power, and some sense of